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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW YORK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced today that Chesel Perkins, age 47, originally from Jamaica and now living in New York City, pleaded guilty in U. S. District Court to an indictment charging him with passport fraud. Perkins is scheduled to be sentenced on July 22, 2003 at 11:30 AM. A violation of the passport fraud statute carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The defendant also faces potential deportation.

One May 25, 1999, Mr. Perkins filed a fraudulent application for a United States passport at a U.S. Post Office in the Bronx, NY. In that application he claimed to be a United States citizen and presented what was later discovered to be, a counterfeit birth certificate purporting to be from the United States Virgin Islands. Mr. Perkins' passport application was processed by the National Passport Center located in Portsmouth, NH. Upon investigation by federal agents it was learned that Perkins had not been born in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but rather in Jamaica. Therefore his claim of U.S. citizenship was false.

After the plea of guilty was entered U.S. Attorney Tom Colantuono stated: "This case is one of many being prosecuted as part of this office's new passport fraud initiative called Operation Checkmate. In conjunction with the United States Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, we are investigating and prosecuting individuals who falsely claim to be United States citizens in order to obtain a U. S. passport, the world's most valuable identification document."

This case was investigated by the U. S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General. This case was prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorney Arnold Huftalen.